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BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION
OF THE
BENJAMIN TREE
OF
SUMATRA.

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Dr Sims from the Author

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BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION, &c.

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THOUGH GARCÍAS AB HORTO, GRIM, and SYLVIUS, were acquainted with the real tree from which Benjamin or Benzoin is collected, their descriptions of it are so imperfect and insufficient for its botanical determination, that succeeding botanists have fallen into many errors concerning it; and it is remarkable, that although this drug was always imported from the East-Indies, most of the later writers on the *Materia Medica* have conceived it to be collected from a species of *Laurus*, native of Virginia, to which, from this erroneous supposition, they have given the trivial name of Benzoin. This mistake seems to have originated with Mr. RAY, who in his *Historia Plantarum*, Vol. II. p. 1845. at the end of his account of the *Arbor Benivifera* of GARCÍAS, says: “ Ad nos
“ scripsit D. TANCREDUS ROBINSON Arborem resiniferam odo-
“ ratam foliis citrinis prædictæ haud absimilem transmissam
“ fuisse e Virginia a D. BANISTER, ad illustrissimum Præ-
“ fulem D. HENR. COMPTON, in cujus instructissimo horto
“ culta est.—Arbor ista Virginiana Citrii, vel Limonii foliis
“ Benzoinum fundens, in horto reverendissimi Episcopi culta.”

This error was detected by LINNÆUS, but another was substituted by him in its place; for in his *Mantissa Plantarum Altera*,

Altera, he tells us, that Benjamin is furnished by a shrub described there under the name of Croton Benzoe, and afterwards in the Supplementum Plantarum, describes again the same plant, under the name of Terminalia Benzoin. M. JACQUIN, who had been informed that this shrub was called by the French *Bienjoint*, supposes, with reason, that the similarity found of that word with *Benjoin*, the French name for Benjamin, may have occasioned this mistake*.

Since that period Dr. HOUTTUYN has described the Benjamin Tree of Sumatra; but for want of good specimens has been so unfortunate as to mistake the genus to which it belongs. It is hoped, therefore, that the following description and annexed figure (see Tab. XII.) may not be unworthy a place in the Philosophical Transactions; they are made from dried specimens procured from Sumatra by Mr. MARSDEN, F. R. S. at the request of Sir JOSEPH BANKS, Bart. P. R. S. and clearly prove that this tree agrees in the parts of fructification with the *Styrax* of LINNÆUS.

STYRAX *Benzoin*, foliis oblongis acuminatis subtus tomentosis, racemis compositis longitudine foliorum.

Benjui. *Garcias ab Horto in Clusii Exoticis*, p. 155.

Arbor Benzoini. *Grim in Ephemer. Acad. Nat. Curios. Dec. 2. Ann. I. pag. 370. fig. 31. Sylvius in Valentini Historia Simplicium*, pag. 487.

Benzuin. *Radermacher in Act. Societ. Bataviæ, vol. III. pag. 44.*

Benjamin or Benzoin. *Marsden's Hist. of Sumatra*, pag. 123.

Laurus Benzoin. *Houttuyn in Act. Harlem. vol. XXI. pag. 265. tab. 7.*

Habitat in Sumatra. ̄.

* Hort. Vindob. vol. III. p. 51.

D E S C R I P T I O.

Rami teretes, tomentosi.

Folia alterna, petiolata, oblonga, integerrima, acuminata, venosa, supra glabra, subtus tomentosa, palmaria. *Petioli* teretes, striati, canaliculati, tomentosi, brevissimi.

Racemi axillares, compositi, longitudine fere foliorum. *Pedunculi communes* tomentosi; *partiales* alterni, patentés, tomentosi. *Pedicelli* brevissimi. *Flores* secundi.

Calyx campanulatus, obsoletissime quinquedentatus, extus tomentosus, linea longior.

Petala quinque, (basi forte connata) linearia, obtusa, extus tomento tenuissimo cinerea, calyce quadruplo longiora.

Filamenta decem, receptaculo inserta, petalis paulo breviora, inferne connata in cylindrum longitudine calycis, superne infra antheras ciliata. *Antheræ* lineares, filamentis longitudinaliter adnatæ, iisque dimidio breviores.

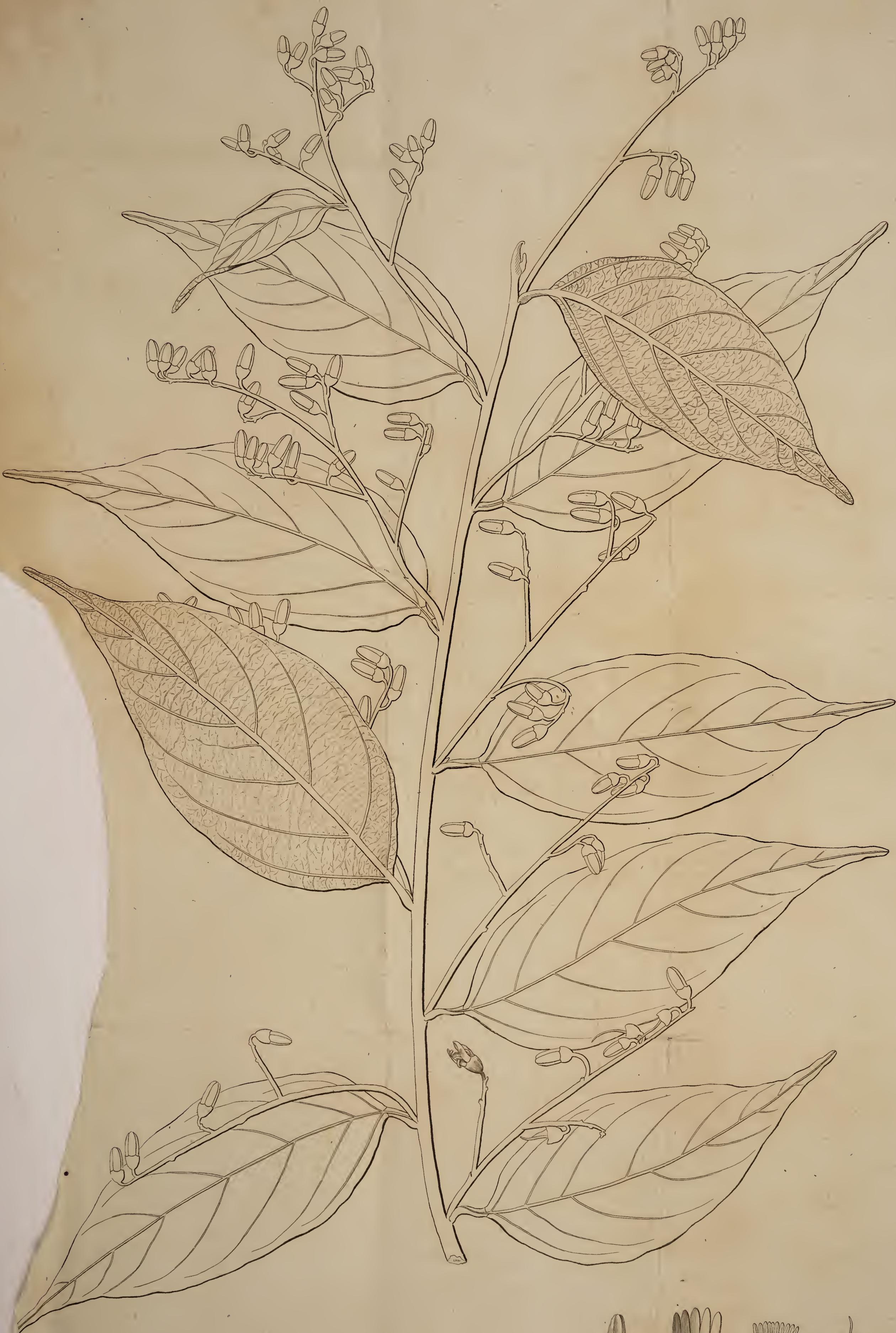
Germen superum, ovatum, tomentosum. *Stylus* filiformis, staminibus longior. *Stigma* simplex.



DESCRIPTION.

The tree is a large, spreading tree, with a trunk that is often hollowed out by termites. The bark is smooth and greyish-brown. The leaves are large, ovate, and have a prominent midrib. The flowers are small and white, and are arranged in dense, terminal panicles. The fruit is a large, woody, spherical capsule that is covered in small, raised bumps. The tree is native to the coastal regions of Senegal and is a common sight in the savanna. It is a valuable tree for many reasons, including its timber, which is used for building and for making charcoal. The bark is also used for medicinal purposes, and the fruit is eaten as a delicacy. The tree is also a source of shade and is often planted in parks and gardens.





Styrax Benzoin.

